

**STATEMENT OF THE
HONORABLE JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.
HEARING ON
THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION AND H.R. 4126,
“THE CHESAPEAKE BAY RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT ACT”**

I would like to welcome everyone to our hearing today on the Chesapeake Bay Program reauthorization and H.R. 4126, “The Chesapeake Bay Restoration and Enhancement Act.”

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States and is critical to the economy, environment, and way of life for millions in the Mid-Atlantic area.

Covering 64,000 square miles, the watershed spans parts of six states and the District of Columbia and is home to 16 million people. There are 150 major streams and tributaries in the Chesapeake Bay basin.

The Bay is an important environmental feature in the region. It is home to millions of waterfowl, and a vast array of fish, shellfish, and other aquatic plants and animals.

For the human population, the Chesapeake Bay provides millions of pounds of seafood, a wide variety of recreational opportunities, and is a major shipping and commercial hub. Two of the nation’s largest ports are on the Chesapeake Bay – Baltimore, Maryland, and Hampton Roads, Virginia.

Beginning with colonial settlement and until today, land use changes in the watershed have affected the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Public concerns about the health of the Bay have been raised since the 1930’s. The deterioration of the Chesapeake Bay can be seen in a decrease in water clarity, a decline in oyster and crab populations, and a lack of underwater grasses. There are even areas of the Bay that are “dead zones” where there is not enough oxygen in the water to sustain life.

The EPA says the major causes of the Bay’s deterioration are excess nutrients and sediments coming from farmlands, wastewater treatment plants, and urban runoff. Septic systems and air deposition of emissions from power plants, cars, and trucks also contribute to the degradation.

In the next 25 years, an additional 3.7 million people are expected to be living in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. As more concrete and asphalt replace forests and open spaces, the runoff of nutrients and sediments into the Bay will quicken. However, it is this same development that provides the economic stability for the region.

We must balance our economic development with our need for clean water and a healthy environment.

In 1983, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and the EPA signed the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement. In 1987, the Chesapeake Bay Program was authorized formally by Congress in the Clean Water Act.

Today the Program is a partnership of states, local entities, and the EPA that directs and conducts restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. The *Chesapeake 2000* agreement set ambitious restoration goals to be met by 2010.

Over the last ten years, \$3.7 billion in direct funding has been provided to the Program from the federal government and the states. Of this, \$972 million has been provided by the federal government. An additional \$1.9 billion in indirect funding has gone to programs that improve the health of the Bay.

Also in the last ten years, the EPA has provided \$1 billion to Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania through the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund.

EPA reports that some progress has been made in cleaning up the Bay, but many challenges remain. A Government Accountability Office report last year suggests that the reported improvements in the Bay may be overstated.

To address the need to reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Program, our Subcommittee colleague, Wayne Gilchrest has introduced H.R. 4126, the “Chesapeake Bay Restoration Enhancement Act of 2005.” The bill has 16 bipartisan co-sponsors, including another Subcommittee colleague, Eleanor Holmes Norton.

The bill would reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Program through 2011, with some modifications.

H.R. 4126 would increase the accountability of the Program to achieve water quality goals and would increase the role of the local governments in Bay restoration. Also, the bill would increase authorized funding from \$40 million to \$50 million annually through 2011.

This is an important bill and deserves our careful consideration.

We have assembled expert witnesses to help us consider this important Program and Mr. Gilchrest’s bill.

We have two distinguished Members of Congress from the Chesapeake Bay watershed – Ms. Jo Ann Davis of Virginia and Mr. Benjamin Cardin of Maryland. In addition, we have representatives of the state and federal partners who administer this program.

I look forward to hearing from all of you.

Let me now turn to the Ranking Member, Ms. Johnson, for any opening statement she would like to make.